'How To Build A Dating App' Podcast – Episode Zero Transcription

Kate:	00:08	Hello and welcome to 'How To Build A Dating App'.
Michael:	00:12	This podcast will chronicle our journey of building and launching a brand new dating app. Our aim for this podcast is to take you through the whole experience of what it takes to build a dating app from scratch, and not just any dating app, but one that we really hope can take on the big competitors in the market.
Richard:	00:28	We're definitely going to be learning some lessons along the way, as this is the first app of this scale that any of us have been involved with, and none of us have worked in the dating industry or are experts in dating.
Kate:	00:38	So to really help us delve into the current dating landscape and online dating trends, we're going to be speaking with some of the leading dating industry experts, coaches, and app developers to share their insights on the industry.
Michael:	00:50	So should we talk a bit about how we got started with this project and why we're here, basically.
Kate:	00:56	Yeah! The company we all work for is a think tank as such, right? So we have a number of businesses, some operating, some conceptual, that run through the NeverWhatIf moniker. So this is I guess a part of that in that it was an idea that sprung from an original business idea, that is trying to fit into an overall objective and obviously it's one that we've all taken a big interest in and we wanted to work on it more creatively maybe than we would with anything else. So hence this podcast and hence, more innovative ways of researching how we might actually build it.
Michael:	01:37	Yeah. Essentially we want to get as many users, or as big of a diverse pool of users as possible, over a time period that we can then introduce future platforms to. So whether that's a recruitment app or whether that is a shopping app, or whatever our team decides to launch I guess, but we need to start with this pool of users. So I guess we kind of thought, what is a good tactic to get a mixture of people of ages of different financial status, different demographics. Different everything really. How can we get a diverse group using something that we can then introduce future developments to.
Kate:	02:24	Yeah, and something super easy for people to join up to, which we now know based on initial research that people will sign up to most dating apps if they feel like if they've got any good reference from their friends or whatever, that they easily will

switch over to something. And they'll also have multiple apps being used at the same time. So we felt like it was a really good entry one for people. But also having looked at it more realised there is many gaps in the area of online dating, which, potentially are hard to fill but could be filled.

Michael:	03:00	Because it's a pretty saturated market, in a way. There are thousands of dating apps, but actually there's quite a lot of low quality apps that are just churned out and filled with bots and scammers, and they're almost more of a chat app some of them. But even some of the mainstream ones aren't suiting what everybody wants. There's none that are meeting all the requirements that all types of people that date are looking for. So I think there's definitely an opportunity, whether it's how niche you go and we're going to going to be talking to a couple of dating experts and app developers about their experience with niche dating apps and how they found that experience compared to more mainstream apps. But there's definitely gaps that could be filled by a new app that caters to something that's missing.
Kate:	03:57	Absolutely.
Richard:	03:58	APPsolutely!
Kate:	03:59	APPsolutely!
Richard:	04:03	Obviously I've never worked anywhere where they build apps at all, let alone dating apps. And of course my only thoughts about this were, yeah Tinder, Bumble, these kind of things. I knew about them, but I just didn't know how would it work, how would you improve on the systems and platforms that are out there already because they are already really popular, the're earning loads of money, would you need to make a better one? But of course as time has gone on and as you guys have filled me in and as I've done my own research about it, there is loads that can be fixed and as we've discussed today, a lot of it based on the issues that people have with current dating apps. And as you say, finding the kind of mutual connection that's just beyond what your face looks like or what you say about yourself in a small little blurb or bio on your profile page. So it's been an interesting ride. I was amazed to find how many apps there are out there and lots of niche ones, weird ones, all colours, sizes, shapes. Quite amazing really.
Kate:	04:53	And what is the longevity of niche? What is the longevity of dating apps in general? If you've got a pretty good churn rate -

pretty good as in a pretty high churn rate - presuming if it works well that people meet people and they migrate off the app.

Richard: 05:27 Retention is the name of the game really. How do people stay on these apps after they've won the game of dating. If you find someone you're really into, you don't need to be on a dating app anymore. And that was one of the major questions that you and Michael posed pretty early on.

Michael: 05:44 Yeah and that's maybe a key area that want to look at is why do people leave? Why is the churn rate so high? Obviously it's going to be a mixture of people not having any success and getting fed up with it and moving on, or people meeting someone and obviously thinking it's not appropriate to have a dating app anymore and I don't need it. But we are kind of interested in looking into what would keep people using a dating app, even once they've met someone or if they have been unsuccessful, what would keep them using it as a social element or a fun game type of element. So I think there's a lot of possibilities flying around in our brains and it's trying to pinpoint what's realistic and what isn't already being done by a lot of different people. Because I think a lot of what we're going to talk about probably has been done in some way, but actually should that discourage us? Potentially not because people might be doing it but might not be doing it particularly well.

Kate: 06:42 And it's the way you market it as well. Not to mention obviously that it needs to work, the actual system needs to work, the design needs to look right, it needs to be easy to use. But how do you market it so that you gain people's trust, because there is such a saturated market, so you do answer these questions or fill these gaps that people are seeing and experiencing and you try make it a better experience. Getting people to believe that that's what they're going to get for their time spent on it is really important. And that's why, like you say, some apps don't do that. We trialled a couple of apps for research purposes a while back and there were some apps that you'd never heard of that were just on the app store when you put in dating, and they did work pretty well. There was conversation prompts for some of them and some things that actually made it quite a good experience, yet the design was kind of bad and you don't hear about it, it's not marketed very well. Also there was one that we used, I think it's Mint, that I actually thought functionality-wise worked really good, but it was really kind of masculine or something. It was very basic in design and that immediately just made me think, oh that's not good. So it's the full package, isn't it?

Richard:	08:01	So would you favour a more neutral design? How does a design have to speak to you to get you to use it?
Kate:	08:07	For me personally, I mean Uber is the best example. Uber is the most simple, classic, contemporary design. It just looks easy to use. And I think that's the point. Like anything more complicated than Uber or Uber Eats, which I definitely use a lot more than actual Uber now. I feel like that's a good example. What's another one?
Michael:	08:33	Because it needs to be, I guess essentially it needs to be familiar. It would be good for us to consider being as familiar as possible to some of the key apps. Same with the chat. I think the Mint chat, when we used it, it was fine and it was easy to use, but maybe it could be better. And it could be that people like using chat systems like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, or just Messenger I guess it's called nowadays, they use those every day. So I guess if you can kind of model yourself on something that people are using and people are enjoying.
Kate:	09:05	It's familiar to them, and inherits a lot more trust.
Richard:	09:08	You've got to make sure there's a really good GIF library there to be able to use.
Kate:	09:12	Yes!
Michael:	09:18	I suppose essentially what we've been thinking is, a lot of conversations in dating apps can be awkward or seedy, or can take real kind of sleazy routes. A lot of people I think, just from our little tests that we did, come in there with a cheesy one liner that they've obviously copy and pasted and just paste it to a whole bunch of potential matches and then there's not much else. A few conversations that you had were like, "oh well what brings you here?". Or "how long have you been on the app?". And "how are you, I'm fine, how are you?", and there's no like spark there. It's going to be hard to draw a spark out of that I guess. Whereas using funny gifts or discussing things that you know you've both got in common, in theory should help that conversation flow a bit better.
Richard:	10:10	Yeah. Like in my Google app, I get little articles based on I think what i've searched for or other things that I've looked at in Google. So recently there's been stuff on Brexit and the new Star Wars movie. Things that i've Googled (kind of boring right?), but things I've Googled are coming up as little news prompts. So I think if you could somehow put that into apps to

be like you could talk about this, this is a recent piece of news or interests that you both have because you've both said, oh I like, lets say Star Wars, you could be like "oh this thing about Episode 9 has just come out, talk about that, what do you think?". Those kind of little prompts are going to be way more successful.

Michael: 10:54 I think that's definitely possible. I think it's just gathering that information from all of the users in the easiest, most user friendly way as possible.

Kate: 11:04 Which is really interesting. I think there's definitely something in educating people, whilst they're trying to use the app. Maybe not as blunt as this, but I need some help with this conversation kind of thing.

Richard: 11:20 Well isn't the point of apps that some people may have trouble talking face-to-face, so that's a good point. People might have that kind of anxiety of well I can't go up and talk to that person, but when you have the warm glow of your phone, able to shield you from that, I think that's part of why they're so popular. And you can think about what you say, because you guys know sometimes I don't think about what I say at all. So you can be a little bit more guarded, you can be a little bit more protective of your own identity or the way you speak to people, or the way you put yourself across.

Michael: 11:56 You can edit and you can spend hours crafting the perfect message that you are 100% happy with. Or you could be in a bar and you could blurt something out and it comes out weird. And then that doesn't happen. So I can see the appeal of it is definitely self-editing and being able to take your time and that kind of thing. But then that I guess doesn't give you a 100% genuine conversation because in real life, like now, you just say things. You don't necessarily think about it beforehand.

Kate: 12:30 Text can be interpreted in lots of different ways as well. Because you're not seeing their behaviour to go alongside it. But I just find it so funny how on apps, like you said, you control the conversation so much. If you want to just block that person, you know, you say "hi, how are you?", they say "hi" back and then you just block them. It's the equivalent of talking to someone in a bar and just like running away after the first sentence. So that's really interesting, and giving someone that control. But maybe there's something in kind of giving live advice to someone to help, because I didn't ever use apps for long at all. I think it was more so like your friends are using them and i'm thinking I should be on, I'm single, I should be on

Bumble or whatever. I never went on one date from it. But any conversations I had, they were just so difficult. Like I really don't know what to say to this stranger. So you just get bored, and think I will leave this conversation, without even telling you why. Just leaving, like not even signing off. It's so easy to do that and have it done to you obviously as well.

Michael:	13:46	And maybe, I wonder, and I guess we'll find out more on this angle when we speak to Hayley Quinn who is the dating coach. I imagine she's spoken to some of her clients that that has happened to, where they've been ghosted or a conversation has been quit without any reason. I imagine that leads to some kind of like detachment when people are using them, they think, "I'm not going to get too excited". Almost like when you're going for a job, "I'm not going to get too excited about this as it might not go anywhere, so I'm just going to give 5% of my interest to this conversation". So then people aren't potentially chatting and putting as much effort as they would in real life, because they're constantly thinking if I say the wrong thing or this person gets distracted with one of the millions of other people on this app, they're just going to go offline and disappear.
Kate:	14:36	So true. There's something about maintaining hope and faith in whatever dating app you're using. That's difficult when maybe it's one in a hundred that's right for you that you end up talking to. So it's difficult to overcome that as the developer or the platform host or brand. Because you are relying on human behaviour, whatever way they use the app, whatever way they interact with whoever they find, you can't really control that. All you can do help the journey. So for us, we think that as a part of the current journey that people go through, it is difficult to have conversations, it's easy to get rejected. Those are the negative things anyway. So finding ways to overcome them technically, great, but you still have to rely on the user obviously.
Michael:	15:30	And I think there's a lot of psychology to it. It may be easy for a development agency like us to just think, okay there's money in dating apps. You can charge people for premium accounts and people will buy credits within the app. You can think of it purely like a business angle and create an app and get out there within a couple of months. But then you've not really understood your target audience, the way they think, why they use apps. The way the market is now, the dating world is very different to when I was dating 10 years ago, so that's I think what we're going to hopefully get from doing this podcast and from speaking to professionals that are dealing with dating every day. Hopefully that will help give us an understanding of the target

audience essentially, which is anybody single! Which is a massive target audience, but one that we don't necessarily understand the ins and outs of. So I guess through our conversations we will meander through all those options.

Kate:	16:38	Yeah. What the best option might be. For sure.
Michael:	16:42	Fair.
Kate:	16:43	Fair.
Michael:	16:45	Stay connected. If you want to get in touch with any questions or feedback, you can find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Soundcloud. Just search for 'How To Build A Dating App' Podcast. Thank you for listening.